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Political Struggle FOR Inclusion IN Higher Education

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CREATING SPACE AND DEVELOPING A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Political struggle is what has led to people with disabilities gaining access to higher education institutions worldwide—an agonism that may have commenced in the 20th century, but one that knows no end, and knows no parameter. Throughout history, collective identity has provided the catalyst for challenging exclusionary cultures of higher education through joint mobilisation, most notably in relation to racial inequalities, as well as discrimination on grounds of gender and disability. Let's open with an exemplar from the United States. Having been informed, "we tried cripples, and they don't work" (quoted in Patterson, 2012, p. 478) by an administrator at the University of California at Berkeley, Ed Roberts made history by successfully litigating for admission. It was the early 1960s and Roberts, who became quadriplegic after contracting polio in his teens, took up residence in the Cowell Memorial Hospital for want of accessible lodgings, from which he attended classes. Support at the time was ad hoc, funding precarious, and staff often did not understand their roles and responsibilities to provide Roberts's access to learning. But in the words of a Nobel laureate whose musical phrasing regularly references social injustices, inequalities and moral atrocities, the times they were a' changing.

Roberts worked—his attendance forced the university to scrutinise its culture—its own physical environment and its practices. However, this realisation

would take collective effort. As Patterson (2012) writes, Roberts was soon joined in Cowell by seven other students with physical impairments. Though segregated in their makeshift home, they created a student hangout replete with poster covered walls, an improvised beer room, and a pool table. Work, for the residents of Cowell, was both intellectual and social. Through ongoing comparison, they soon realised "the remarkable presence of relationships founded on shared experiences of disability" (Patterson, 2012, p. 479). As a group they adopted the moniker the "Rolling Quads," which as Patterson describes, was branded as "a coalition of disabled students determined to increase accessibility across campus, build a residence outside of the hospital, and secure financial assistance for personal care attendants" (p. 480). Successful to this end, the group evolved into an effective political force, a disability rights group that lobbied for the creation of a student support model, the Disabled Student's Program (DSP).

The DSP attained a federal grant, which would ensure that their contribution to cultural change would be set in stone. As Patterson (2012, p. 480) writes:

> The grant supported salaries for a DSP director, counsellors, wheelchair repairs, student financial support, accessible vans, and funds to travel to conferences, including those of the President's Committee on Handicapped Persons. With financial backing and a full-time staff, DSP was able to make significant changes to campus.

The Berkeley example was a forerunner of present-day student support offices at higher education institutions internationally. In the 1970s the Rolling Quads went on to turn their attentions to broader community interests away from the university, lobbying successfully to break down physical barriers to city facilities.

Across the Atlantic, similar political actions were taking place. The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), an organisation formed exclusively by disabled people, published a manifesto of their own in 1976 entitled the Fundamental Principles of Disability. For UPIAS, similar to the Rolling Quads, the principal cause of exclusion for people with disabilities was not their impairments, but the barriers that prevent them from participating freely in society on par with able-bodied people. It is worth quoting them at large to clarify their sitpoint (quoted in Oliver, 2009, p. 43):

> As a group, we are excluded from the mainstream of social activities. In the final analysis, the particular form of poverty principally associated with physical impairment is caused by our exclusion from the ability to earn an income on a par with our able-bodied peers, due to the way employment is organised. This exclusion is linked with our exclusion from participating in the social activities and provisions that make general employment possible. For example, physically impaired school children are characteristically excluded from normal education preparatory to work, we are unable to achieve the same flexibility in using transport and finding suitable housing so as to live conveniently to our possible employment, and so on.

This manifesto would go on to serve as the departure point for the influential social model of disability—a cultural artefact that has had unmistakable impact internationally. The social model underpins the work of many disability activist organisations throughout the world, such as Disabled Peoples International (DPI, 2012) and the World Blind Union (WBU, 2014). Though not specifically concerned with higher education in its development, the social model has found application in numerous pan-national developments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (The Convention). The Convention explicitly cites educational inclusion for people with disabilities. Further, individual countries have responded in their own way to these initiatives for developing context-specific inclusive educational systems, which generally cite the social model as underpinning principles (read European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017; Rieser, 2008).

BUT STOP—WAIT A MINUTE

We have described above successful political actions that have been mobilised by collectives of people with disabilities, who have drawn deeply on their experiences of segregation to effect cultural change. In these cases, these efforts have gained justifiable access to learning, teaching, employment and community participation. We acknowledge that these are only a couple of examples of collective action. We recognise, too, that as triumphant as they might be, they are situated in Western Europe and North American (WENA) settings; that the initiators of these activisms were ordinarily male persons with physical impairments; and that in these contexts, particular ways of knowing disability and responding with appropriate resourcing can lead to the application of principles of universal design to built and learning environments with relative ease. Indeed, Patterson (2012) describes several axes of activism by people with disabilities to effect change at universities across the United States in addition to Ed Roberts's triumphs, most notably all undertaken by people with physical impairments who used wheelchairs. Almost sixty years on from Roberts's first day at Berkeley, higher education institutions are still exploring student support, as well as how far they might be willing and/or legally obligated to go in facilitating student access. However, more institutions—both from global north and south contexts—are involved in these ongoing considerations, and the diversity of student needs they are now anticipated to support has increased.

Genuine attempts to be inclusive in the present day—to provide educational opportunities to all—must reach farther than those that we have described so far. Higher education providers must make study options available to not only people with physical impairments, but also sensory, intellectual, developmental and

psycho-social conditions that may manifest episodically. Any number of inter-
sectional identifiers can also impact on a persons' capacity for study, including
ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic context, and citizenship status. Moreover,
in the context of increased globalisation and mobility of persons—a field to which
country-specific higher education providers enthusiastically work—institutions
are expected to be proactively supportive in their response to individual learning
needs. Laws have been enacted, and policies have been created, but there is still
much more to do.

A COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR TODAY

Just as those initial forays into inclusion were the result of shared student voice
and student demand, *Disability and the University: A Disabled Students' Manifesto*
continues that tradition, by providing a global collective of student perspectives.
This is not a book written about students with disabilities. It is written by those
that have traversed the terrain and experienced higher education with a disabil-
ity. Every contributor has experienced directly what they are writing about. The
volume contributes the voices of a newer generation of people with diverse condi-
tions and accessibility needs sizing up and demanding notice. *Manifesto* is a clear
guide to not only what students want (and need to know), but what higher educa-
tion providers—whether north or south—should provide. Each chapter presents
a benchmark for students to follow as they travel through the institution, and also
lays clear what they should expect. Each chapter is also a clear statement of what
every institution of higher education should provide. While every country has its
own practice and laws based on its own experience, arbitrary national boundaries
should no longer be a reason for practices that do not meet student need. This
book speaks across borders, east, west, north and south. It leaves little doubt about
what needs to be done to develop more inclusive teaching and learning spaces in
higher education.

Structure of the Book

Disability and the University: A Disabled Students' Manifesto is divided into four
parts, each examining crucial aspects of further education, including the culture of
the academy, moving beyond the limits of compliance, access to and in the insti-
tution, and disability rights.

    The remainder of Part One examines the culture of the academy—a culture
that can exclude many by its very design. Privilege is a term explored widely
in social research (Apple, Ball, & Gandin, 2010)—privilege in a culture that
can exclude by overt and implicit design. The chapters in this section consider

what it means to navigate this culture, and in so doing considers how it can be changed.

In Chapter 2, Travis Chi Wing Lau presents a discussion of how both students and scholars with disabilities are excluded by the dominant temporal regimes of American neoliberal universities. Weaving theoretical understandings of the temporal and disability with an account of the frenetic pace of course requirements and assessment regimes, Lau takes solace from the slow academic movement to advocate for cultural change in universities. Lau's take home message is that inclusion is affected by much more than mere admission to higher education programs.

In Chapter 3, Denise Beckwith addresses the ableism intrinsic to university processes, which require that ongoing, medically-based explanations are provided in order to attain reasonable adjustments to study. Beckwith demonstrates that in spite of a university's best intentions, lack of training can lead staff to neglect their responsibilities to provide safety and protection to all students. Beckwith portends the value of individual and collective advocacy for redressing entrenched notions of integration over inclusion.

In a similar vein, Chapter 4 is presented by Fady Shanouda on the complex terrain of disclosure in higher education. Shanouda describes processes of both formal and informal disclosure of one's condition as institutional violence that leads to visceral consequences. Shanouda advocates for the formation of alliances with critically-oriented university staff as a way of finding comfort through a person's studies.

Leechin Heng's contribution occupies Chapter 5, in which she considers how knowledge about disability is taken for granted by higher education providers, and as well in their course programs. Implicit rules position students with disabilities in particular ways, which can and do go by unchallenged. Heng suggests ways that higher education providers can break this mould by actively working with diverse worldviews, in particular of those with disabilities.

Chapter 6 concludes the first section of the book in which Megan Zahneis turns her attention to the role of higher education study in the formation of students' identities. To this end, higher education institutions have a significant role in supporting people with disabilities in affirming their identities—a portentous message given the discussions presented in the preceding chapters of the book. Zahneis calls for the intentional inclusion of disability studies scholarship in course curricula, for the value it can provide to subjective wellbeing and self-understanding. She demonstrates the impact of disability studies curricula beyond the confines of the classroom, to processes core to an institution's culture.

Part Two demands careful consideration beyond what is offered, beyond the limits of compliance, beyond letters of accommodation, and beyond what is considered, at this moment in time, as "reasonable accommodations." It asks the

reader to consider their own power—achieving more rights through organization and activism, as a previous generation has done.

In Chapter 7, Justin Freedman, Laura Jaffee, Katie Roquemore, Yosung Song and Hetsie Veitch introduce readers to a committee deliberately set up at a university whose objective is to support the institution to go beyond mere compliance in its efforts to respond to demands for inclusivity. Disability studies inform committee activities, including mandatory training at the university and activist events. The authors demonstrate the significance of addressing inequalities for students with disabilities as a priority for developing inclusive environments.

George Low explores the necessity as well as the limitations of reasonable adjustments in Chapter 8. The reductive tendency of universities to categorise impairments with adjustment type, and as well poor communication between staff, can significantly impact the efficacy of modifications available to students with disabilities. Low advocates intentional collaboration to ensure that adjustments are tailored to student need, as a priority for building inclusion into institutional practices.

In Chapter 9 Zoie Sheets explores letters of accommodation as a mechanism for supporting a disabled student's access to learning. Letters of accommodation, Sheets explains, can be taken up in very different ways by different university staff, in effect providing further barriers to learning. Sheets advises ways for students to ensure accommodation requirements are understood by teaching staff, while clarifying that documented adjustment necessities alone cannot sufficiently develop inclusive opportunities in higher education.

Justin Harford explores the world in Chapter 10 by way of the necessity to ensure that international study exchange programs are inclusive of students with disabilities. Recognising that barriers prevent the participation of underrepresented students in international exchange, Harford recommends designing disability access requirements into exchange programs from the beginning. In so doing, Harford points to an aspect of higher education study that may otherwise seem impossible to also be inclusive of students with disabilities.

In Chapter 11, Mostafa Attia addresses higher education participation for students with disabilities in majority world contexts. Barriers persist in admissions processes, inconsistent support services, inaccessible resource provision, and rigid assessment procedures. Attia describes the importance of collective action to effect change, as a priority for developing inclusive higher education systems in majority world countries.

Parts Three and Four consider the topic of access, going beyond the concept as explored in the previous sections. Part Three has a particular focus on the physical environment from multiple perspectives.

In Chapter 12, April B. Coughlin explores the necessity to advocate strongly for universities to provide basic physical access to their facilities. Just as important to accessible campus facilities is the provision of inclusive and accessible

accommodation. Coughlin contends that though higher education providers tout their commitment to diversity and inclusion, separated and specialist provisions tend to shadow these ideals. Coughlin advises students with disabilities to take up creative ways of advocating for change, including the development of videos that demonstrate the personal cost of inaccessible facilities.

Georgia Geller presents a discussion of assistance dogs on university campuses in Chapter 13, noting in particular the strain that ill-prepared higher education institutions can have on students when they lack appropriate toileting facilities and procedures for admitting service animals. Geller describes the implications of the presence of a service dog on matters of disclosure, control and access, and she offers advice to students to this end for responding to instances of potential discrimination.

In Chapter 14 Erin Pritchard examines physical barriers on university campuses. Normative standards, even those designed to provide universal access to all, can persist, and Prichard's discussion unpacks these concerns by way of apparent hierarchies of impairment. Examining the exclusionary nature of these norms, Prichard highlights the significance of access to aspects of the built environment as mundane as doorways, chairs and tables and their impact on genuine inclusiveness.

Boopathi P and Muruganandan K conclude Part Three in Chapter 15 by returning to the majority world context, and a description of the struggles to achieve inclusion of students with disabilities into higher education. The authors describe a policy initiative that, although effective in increasing participation of disabled students in higher education, requires deliberate attention to be implemented in full. The authors make suggestions for strengthening this important resource, from admission through the design of teaching and learning activities, curriculum and assessment practices.

Part Four delves into the implications of examining access—the removal of barriers to higher education so that they can become environments inclusive of all who wish to continue their studies.

In Chapter 16, Katelin Anderson and Beth Rogers explore some of the challenges associated with reasonable adjustments to learning programs in higher education, citing conflicts in practices that can be exclusive for students with disabilities. In many cases disability rights legislation is in place to counter any such conflicts, and the authors recommend students with disabilities to familiarise themselves with these in order to be able to assert their position. The authors offer practical strategies for both students and institutions to exercise legislated inclusive practices.

Chapter 17 comprises a discussion, by Karen McCall, about the significance of digital inclusion. As higher education providers rely more on digital environments to support their core offerings both in administration and teaching and learning, inaccessibility can be easily overlooked. McCall provides useful strategies to embed in both policy and practice for higher education providers to ensure digital barriers do not prevent students with disabilities gaining access.

Tafadzwa Rugoho returns our attention to the majority world context in Chapter 18, describing the increase of higher education providers and barriers to participation for students with disabilities that include negative attitudes, limited course offerings, and physical and technological accessibility. Wholesale changes to university infrastructure is required to broaden the participation of disabled students. To this end, Rugoho makes practical suggestions for change to both students and institutions.

In Chapter 19 Maree Roche attends to higher education participation for students with psychosocial disabilities. With a high prevalence of students with anxiety and related mental health concerns entering higher education, Roche's well-timed exploration of institutional practices to support student learning explores the sporadic nature of these conditions on learning. Roche's analysis comprises strategic recommendations to support learning, including how to engage with supervisors, how to plan and write up work, and what to expect from institutions.

Matthew Bereza concludes the book in Chapter 20 with a contribution about participation in higher education for students with learning difficulties. Access to learning can be easily compromised when higher education providers neglect to support students with intellectual impairments, to which Bereza responds by calling for radical inclusion—a deeply political program of inclusive development. Bereza's clarion call to higher education institutions is to develop dedicated resources for this endeavour.

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